

fish kills occur. On days when water is pumped in, weak fish swim towards the fresh sea water at the pumping station. Greenshanks utilise this opportunity and catch weak or dying fish.

September 19, 1989 RANJIT MANAKADAN

14. A FLOCK OF ONE-LEGGED GREENSHANKS *TRINGA NEBULARIA*

On 20 February 1989, I sighted a flock of 15 greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* in one of the condensers of the Mettur Chemical & Industrial Corporation near the Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary in Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu. Of these 15 birds, nine had only one leg each. What could be the reason for the congregation of one-legged greenshanks?

The greenshank is usually solitary or in small parties of 3-5. However during migration they may

form flocks of more than 15-20 (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983). I presume the flocking of one-legged birds was not incidental but forced grouping of handicapped birds together for migration back to their wintering grounds as they were not able to keep up with healthy birds.

September 19, 1989 RANJIT MANAKADAN

15. RIVER TERN *STERNA AURANTIA* GRAY SNATCHING A FISH FROM PARIAH KITE *MILVUS MIGRANS* (BODDAERT) IN FLIGHT

On 3 November 1989, I visited Tighra dam in Gwalior district of Madhya Pradesh in connection with my month-wise survey of birds. I saw a pariah kite *Milvus migrans* flying over the water with a fish in its claws, coming towards me from across the dam. I had no way of knowing whether the kite had actually caught a live fish, or had just picked up a dead one.

A river tern *Sterna aurantia* that was trying to catch prey in the water, suddenly attacked the kite and tried to 'snatch' the fish from its claws. The tern

repeatedly attacked the claws of the kite with its bill. The kite tried to defend itself by turning, twisting and increasing speed. But after some efforts the tern succeeded in snatching the fish. While snatching the fish, the tern seemed to be stationary for a second or so. The tern devoured the fish before landing on the ground.

September 18, 1989 RAJIV SAXENA

16. RANGE EXTENSION OF ASHY WOOD PIGEON *COLUMBA PULCHRICOLLIS* BLYTH

A Himalayan forest bird, the ashy wood pigeon *Columba pulchricollis* occurs between c. 1200 and 3200 m from west-central Nepal through Sikkim, Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and probably Nagaland and Mizoram. Like other fruit pigeons it is subject to considerable wandering depending on fruit supply. It is recorded locally in the Bengal duars and Arunachal foothills as low as 100-150 m (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Compact edition, Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983). However, there is no record from the foothills in Assam.

One individual of this species was seen in Manas

Wildlife Sanctuary on 3 May 1988. It was spotted on the road in a mixed, fairly dense forest (26°43'N, 91°E) of tropical semi-evergreen type, about halfway between Basbari and Mothanguri. The altitude of the sighting was less than 100 m (c. 80 m according to local forest department authorities). This is perhaps the first sight record of this pigeon from the foothills in Assam below Bhutan Himalayas, and that too at such a low elevation.

August 30, 1989

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